MARVEL

3

LGY#282

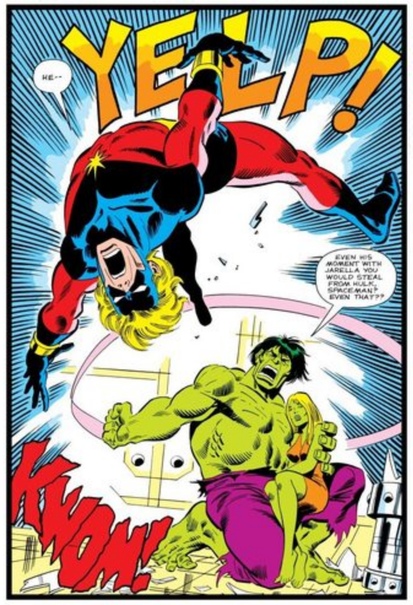
PERCY SOARES JUNIOR D'ARMATA

THE PUNISHER

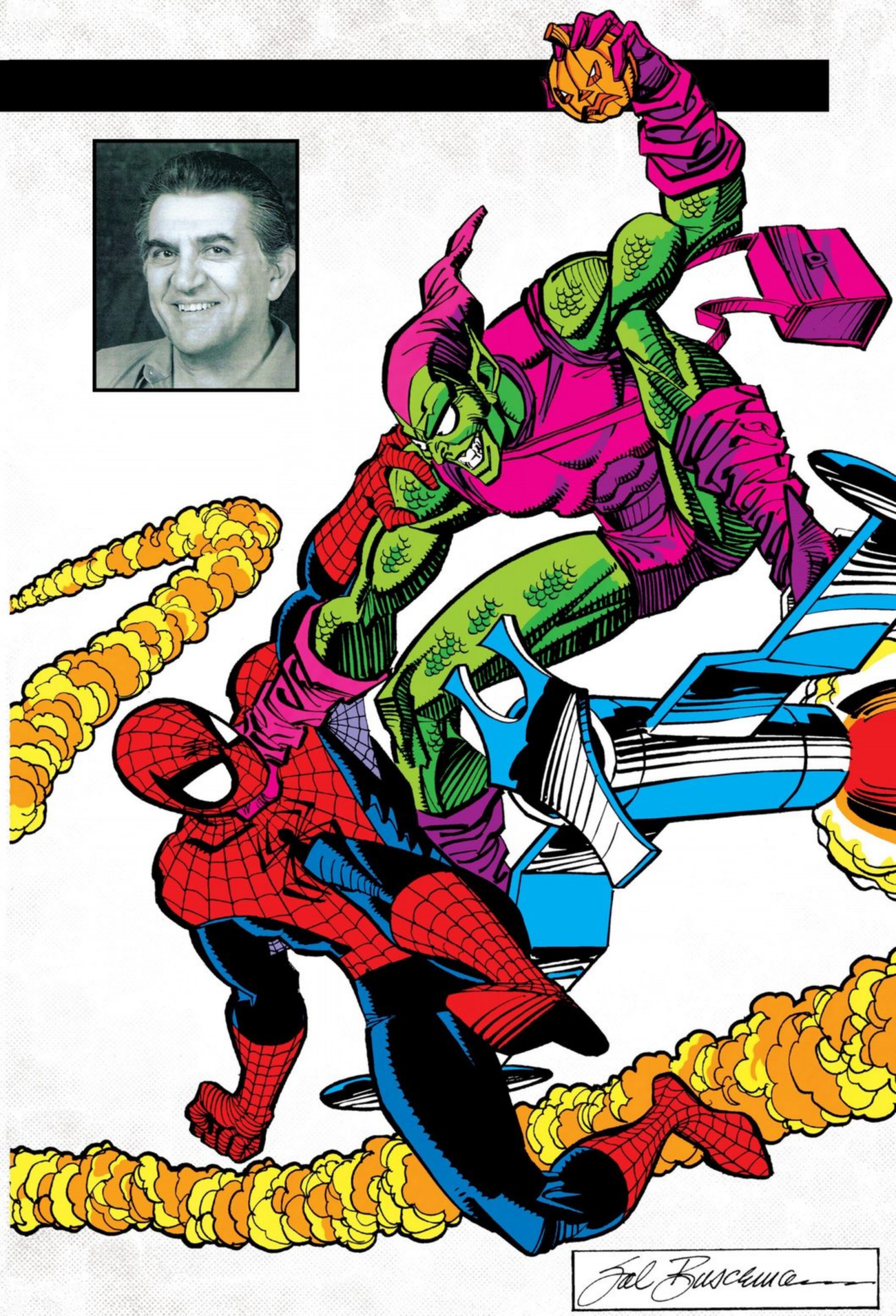
MARCO GURU eFX

PARENTAL ADVISORY

SAL BUSCEMA
1936-2026



Marvel pauses to remember Sal Buscema, a foundational Marvel artist since 1969. Buscema was a prolific penciler and inker, working on nearly every Marvel character. His clear, dynamic storytelling was a feature of long, historic runs on *Spectacular Spider-Man*, *Incredible Hulk* and *Rom*. Buscema was famed for drawing bombastic roundhouse punches that sent characters sprawling across the page, but he could also be capable of great subtlety and emotion in his character acting. "Our Pal Sal" will be missed by generations of Marvel fans.



MERCY GENERAL HOSPITAL. NEW YORK.

A KILLER WHO CAN'T KILL...

I DON'T KNOW, FRANK.

SOUNDS LIKE A WINNING DIAGNOSIS TO ME.

HOW ABOUT LET'S GO HOME AND--

HELP.

MY TUMMY. IT HURTS SO BAD.

IT FEELS LIKE THERE'S KNIVES INSIDE ME.

WHY THEY GOT YOU IN THE HALLWAY, KID?

BECAUSE A BUNCH OF HURTED PEOPLE CAME IN.

"THERE WAS YELLING. THERE WAS BLOOD.

"THEY GOT SHOT.

"THEY GOT SHOT BY A BAD GUY, BUT THE BAD GUY DIDN'T GET CAUGHT."

THE BAD GUY HATES THEM.

HE REALLY, REALLY HATES THEM.

"AND HE'S STILL OUT THERE SOMEWHERE."

THE DOCTORS SAID I'D BE SAFER OUT HERE.

BLAM

IS HE THE ONE WHO'S GOING TO TAKE ME ACROSS THE RIVER?

WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT, KID?

BLAM BLAM

"MY BROTHER-- HE TOLD ME ABOUT THE RIVER.

"HE TOLD ME THAT BEFORE YOU DIE...

BLAM

"...A MAN IN BLACK FINDS YOU.

"HE TELLS YOU TO COME WITH, AND YOU CAN'T SAY NO.

BLAM

"AND HE TAKES YOU ON A BOAT ACROSS A RIVER OF BLOOD...

"...TO THE DEAD PLACE."

DON'T WORRY, KID.

YOU'RE NOT GOING TO DIE.

KID?

KID!

EMERGE

THE DOCTOR GAVE FRANK SOMETHING.

PILLS. LITHIUM.

HE SAID MAYBE THEY'D HELP FIGHT THE FEELING INSIDE HIM.

THE SICK AND SEARING PAIN THAT FOLLOWED VIOLENCE.

AFTER RETIRED MARINE FRANK CASTLE'S WIFE AND CHILDREN WERE KILLED BY STRAY GUNFIRE DURING A SHOOT-OUT IN CENTRAL PARK, HE BEGAN A ONE-MAN VIGILANTE WAR ON CRIME. ARMED WITH A VAST ARSENAL AND GRIM DETERMINATION, HE BECAME...
THE PUNISHER
2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2
9
8

THE DEAD PLACE

Frank Castle is back but is suffering from blackouts after being used as a mind-controlled hitman. His old ally Microchip took him to the hospital, but tests found no physical cause for his condition--though the doctor did give Frank pills that could help. Meanwhile, with Tombstone in prison, Jigsaw is making his move on New York City's criminal underworld, luring Tombstone's lieutenants to a meeting--the location of which he also shared with reporter Madeline Phipps.

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THE BAR NOIRE.

I'D LIKE TO DIRECT EVERYONE'S ATTENTION TO THE MENU.

THERE HAVE BEEN SOME CHANGES THAT MIGHT BE OF INTEREST.

LET ME KNOW IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS.

YEAH, I GOT A QUESTION.

WHERE THE @#$% IS TOMBSTONE?

AND WHAT THE @#$% IS THIS?

YOUR FACE

ISN'T IT ALL PERFECTLY CLEAR?

TOMBSTONE ISN'T COMING.

HE'S NEVER COMING, BECAUSE THIS TIME, HE CAN'T BULLY OR BRIBE HIS WAY OUT OF THE PRISON I'VE GOT HIM IN.

YOU ALL WORKED FOR AND WITH HIM.

SO I'M GOING TO NEED ALL YOUR FACES!

BUPDA BUPDA BUPDA BUPDA

THE PILLS SEEM TO WORK.

SO HE WORKS TOO.

HUNTING.

LIKE A SHARK IN A REEF.

SMAK

OR A RAPTOR RIDING AN UPDRAFT.

HE SCANS THE ENVIRONMENT...

...AND THEN HE STRIKES.

SKINSH

TH-THANKS...

WHAT HE'S DOING DOESN'T FEEL GOOD.

IN FACT, IT MAKES HIS BODY FEEL SICK, REPULSED.

BUT HE *HAS* TO DO IT.

THE CITY MOVES FAST.

THE WAY PEOPLE TALK AND WALK, THE WAY PEOPLE DRIVE.

EVERYONE KNOWS WHAT THEY WANT AND SPRINTS AFTER IT.

TONIGHT, HE MOVES WITH THE SAME URGENCY...

...EVEN AS THE MOTIONS FEEL PAINED.

HOT DOG, HOT DOG, HOT DOG...

HOT DOG?

MONEY'S BETTER.

WHATEVER YOU GOT IN THE TILL.

SKLIK

H-HOT DOG?

ALL BEEF. IS GOOD.

THE NIGHT WON'T LAST FOREVER.

AND NEITHER WILL THE PILLS.

SO HE GOES TO THE PLACE THAT USED TO MATTER SO MUCH.

THIS.

THIS IS WHERE IT HAPPENED.

THIS IS WHERE HIS FAMILY WAS GUNNED DOWN ALL THOSE YEARS BEFORE.

HE TRIES TO PLUG IN TO THAT FEELING AGAIN.

THIS SICKNESS OR ALLERGY OR WALL... WHATEVER IT IS...

...MAYBE HE CAN OVERCOME IT WITH A TRIGGERING *WHY.*

BUT THIS PLACE WON'T GIVE HIM ANYTHING.

IT'S LIKE A DEAD FUSE.

HE TWISTS HEAD LIKE BOTTLE CAP.

POP! JUST LIKE THAT. IS DEAD.

HE HAS SKULL, YES?

RIGHT HERE. BIG SKULL. BIG DEATH.

I SEE HIM GO.

HE WALKS TO PARK.

HOT DOG? YOU LIKE?

YOU SAID TO LET YOU KNOW IF WE HEARD OR SAW ANYTHING.

SO I'M LETTING YOU KNOW.

THE PUNISHER'S HERE.

YOU WANT ME TO MAKE A MOVE?

MADELINE... WE CAN'T JUST GO BARGING INTO THIS PLACE.

IT'S A GANGSTER STRONGHOLD.

SHUT UP, KEITH.

THIS IS A BAD IDEA.

THIS IS A GREAT IDEA.

I...WAS PROMISED A STORY THAT WOULD GET ME THE SPOTLIGHT...

AND... OH, GOD... I'VE--I'VE GOT ONE.

STEADY. GOOD.

THINK I'M GOING TO PUKE.

YOU'LL HAVE TIME FOR THAT LATER.

RIGHT NOW, I NEED COVERAGE.

WHAT'S THIS?

DÉLINE PHIPPS

WANT TO KEEP WORKING TOGETHER? MEET ME AT THE MET TOMORROW AT NOON SPECIAL EXHIBIT

LATER...

MICRO... WE'VE GOT A PROBLEM.

A REAL BIG PROBLEM.

YEAH...YEAH, WE'VE GOT A PROBLEM.

FRANK... I'VE GOT A CONFESSION TO MAKE.

AND YOU'RE NOT GOING TO LIKE IT.

THAT'S WHY I LOCKED MYSELF IN HERE.

I'VE GOT THE KEY, AND I'LL SLIDE IT UNDER THE DOOR WHEN I THINK IT'S SAFE.

REALLY, I SHOULDN'T TELL YOU.

IT'S BEEN MY PLAN FROM THE BEGINNING NOT TO TELL YOU.

NOT BECAUSE I'M AFRAID OF WHAT YOU'LL DO TO ME...

...THOUGH I AM.

BUT BECAUSE I THOUGHT I WAS DOING THE RIGHT THING.

BUT THAT KID!

I CAN'T STOP THINKING ABOUT THAT DAMN KID IN THE HALLWAY.

YOU KNOW WHAT I LEARNED ABOUT THAT GUY? THE GUY WHO SHOT UP THOSE PEOPLE? AND STORMED THE E.R.

HE'D BEEN IN AND OUT OF PRISON *FIVE* TIMES IN *SEVEN* YEARS.

THEY KEEP LETTING HIM OUT, BECAUSE THEY DON'T HAVE ROOM.

THOSE WERE HIS NEIGHBORS HE SHOT UP.

HE SAID THEIR TV WAS TOO LOUD. THEIR @#$%&# TV.

I'M THE REASON YOU'RE FEELING THE WAY YOU'RE FEELING, FRANK.

IT'S SOME CODING I LEFT BEHIND IN YOU.*

*READ PUNISHER: RED BAND FOR MIND PLANTS AND MAYHEM.

YOUR BRAIN STEM ESSENTIALLY SHORT-CIRCUITS WHEN EXPOSED TO VIOLENCE.

I THOUGHT I WAS DOING YOU--AND THE WORLD--A FAVOR.

HRNNN.

BUT I WAS WRONG.

SOME PEOPLE DON'T DESERVE TO LIVE, FRANK.

IT'S AN UGLY TRUTH, BUT IT'S A TRUTH.

YOU GET RID OF THOSE PEOPLE, AND YOU SAVE THE WORLD FROM HARM.

THAT'S A GOOD AND TERRIBLE THING...

...OR AT LEAST THAT'S WHAT I'VE CONVINCED MYSELF...

THAT KID IN THE HALL... MAYBE HE'D STILL BE ALIVE...

...IF THE GUY WITH THE SEMIAUTO HAD MET YOU INSTEAD OF THE LEGAL SYSTEM.

YOU'RE LIKE A WILDFIRE, FRANK.

NOBODY LIKES A WILDFIRE, BUT THEY'RE NECESSARY.

THEY CLEAN THE FOREST OUT.

RIGHT?

PLEASE LET ME BE RIGHT.

LOOK AT THE GUN RACK BESIDE YOU.

YOU SEE THE SHOTGUN?

CYCLE THE ACTION.

THERE'S SOMETHING INSIDE I WANT YOU TO SEE.

IT'S A DEPROGRAMMER.

YOU'VE GOT NO REASON TO TRUST ME AT THIS POINT.

BUT I'M GIVING YOU THE CHOICE.

FIND A NEW PATH, OR GO BACK TO THE DEAD PLACE.

THIS IS THE ONLY TRIGGER YOU EVER NEEDED, FRANK.

IT WAS NEVER ABOUT MARIA AND THE KIDS.

THE KILLING, IT'S ALWAYS BEEN INSIDE YOU.

IF YOU'RE GOING TO DO THIS, FRANK, I WISH YOU'D HESITATE.

BUT I'M GUESSING YOU WON'T.

JUST CHAMBER THE SHOTGUN.

PUT THE MUZZLE TO YOUR HEAD.

AND FIRE.

TO BE CONTINUED?!

Frankly Speaking

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EMAIL US AT MHEROES@MARVEL.COM AND MARK YOUR MESSAGES "OKAY TO PRINT" FOR A CHANCE TO SEE THEM ANSWERED IN FUTURE ISSUES!

WHAT A HEADACHE FOR FRANK!

Hello in here, out there, around the world and aboard all the ships at sea! Editor Devin Lewis reporting to you live and in-print from Marvel HQ in the heart of New York, where it's mid-March, but Old Man Winter is still, somehow, holding on! I tell you, I'm personally not a big gun or hunting person, but if it meant we'd avoid six more weeks of winter each year, I don't think I would have many qualms with Frank Castle finding his way out of NYC and going groundhog hunting! I'm just taking solace in the fact that by the time this issue reaches you and is in your hands, we'll be well into the spring season with warmer days upon us!

BUT CAN THE SAME BE SAID OF FRANK CASTLE?! After all, he just took some sort of tech-heavy shotgun shell to the dome! Devised by Microchip as a last-ditch effort to help Frank fix his ailing brain... DID IT WORK?! And as whatever circuitry is left in his head continues to short out, what will even be left of Frank himself?!

The only way to find out is to keep reading, True Believers! So don't miss a single pulse-pounding, Punishing page!

ITEM: Last ish, we sounded the clarion call for you readers out there in Mighty Marveldom to drop us a line to share your thoughts on the first two issues of this brutal book, and you answered in droves! The mailbag is fit to bursting, so let's cut the small talk and get right to your fan mail, shall we?

Ben,

BP does it again. I've never really gotten into the Punisher too much, TBH; the Jason Aaron series was one thing, but all the mindless killing? Couldn't Frank "borrow" some of Cable's or Bishop's futuristic guns and take down people that way? Remember in *T2,* how John Connor got the Terminator to only shoot out kneecaps? Hey, do you think the Punisher would ever get capital punishment?

Good issue, good fit.

Cheers,
Andrew J. S.

Thanks for reading and for writing, as always, Andrew! It's so great to hear that you think Ben is a good fit for this series--we did too! In our earliest conversations about Ben's turn with Frank, he mentioned that he was a PUNISHER fan in his youth, and in this business, a writer having a fondness for a character they'll be writing is ALWAYS a good sign. Ben almost immediately started concocting a BUNCH of gonzo and intense stories to tell with Frank, so keep your eyes peeled! BUT! I don't think any involving Cable or Bishop (or their firepower) have come up yet! You just might be onto something there...

Hey PUNISHER Team,

I've been a longtime fan of the character and absolutely love the direction you guys are going with him. I love the format of the panels, the colors and even the plot that feels like something out of the '80s and '90s books. Since RED BAND, I've been collecting physicals again. I especially love the message in the latter half with the reporter, where her editor says nobody cares about crime in a world of massive super heroes because it reminds the audience why the Punisher matters. Can't wait to see more!

Cesar B.

Thanks for reading, Cesar! Letters like this are our favorite to receive, and it's an absolute privilege to be able to welcome you back to the Marvel fold--nothing beats going to the comic shop! Be sure to add PUNISHER to your pull list, and as you're getting reacquainted with some of what's been going on in the Marvel Universe, I'd love to recommend a couple of our humble mags--MARC SPECTOR: MOON KNIGHT, DAREDEVIL and DAREDEVIL/PUNISHER, because you seem to be a glutton for Punishment (hah!).

From superstar writer Jed MacKay and your new favorite artist Devmalya Pramanik, the entire first arc of MARC SPECTOR: MOON KNIGHT should be on sale, and if your shop has sold out (AS THEY SHOULD HAVE!), they can almost certainly help you track down whatever issues they may be missing. Conveniently, the first issue of an all-new and explosive arc involving some of the Marvel U's most hotheaded and dangerous guest stars will be kicking off with MARC SPECTOR: MOON KNIGHT #4, due on sale on May 6th!

By the time you read this, DAREDEVIL #1 will be on sale at last, as well! An all-new era and epic from Stephanie Phillips and Lee Garbett--it sees Hell's Kitchen and the Man Without Fear on the perilous precipice of paranoia, struggling to find their way back to normalcy. It's GREAT, and, better yet, DAREDEVIL #2 is ALSO on sale on May 6th for your shopping convenience.

Last, but by no means least, there's DAREDEVIL/PUNISHER: THE DEVIL'S TRIGGER from Jimmy Palmiotti, Tommaso Bianchi and more! A limited series that wrapped earlier this year--every issue should be available RIGHT NOW! SO WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR?!

Dear Marvel,

It is EMBARRASSING how happy I was when I saw the new PUNISHER comic. I think I concerned my roommate with how excited I was. In the time leading up to its publication, I have told no fewer than fifty people. I am the only one of my friends (and family) who is interested in comics. I explained Punisher to my mother maybe five times. Probably more. I reread multiple runs. While reading, I had to stand up and pace around my room because I was so happy. This new run is my equivalent to Christmas when you're 8.

I am so, so, so excited for the next issue! I think Jigsaw is one of my favorite Punisher villains, and I'm so excited to see what ends up happening! I'm also very curious to see if any other guys end up appearing--especially because it was mentioned that there's going to be some surprises! Russian? Mennonite? Another crime family??

Once again, I'm so excited to see where this ends up going and tell

what will probably be another fifty people!!

Lottie

HAPPY HOLIDAYS, LOTTIE! We hope this series has lived up to your expectations thus far and continues to exceed your expectations, yuletide or otherwise! Thanks for being one of Frank's Faithful and spreading the word about our saga!

(Be sure to give your mom a copy too, so she can get a sense of what Frank's all about!)

Dear PUNISHER Team,

I am beyond stoked you guys are bringing Jigsaw back. Not only are you bringing him back, but finally his threat level is being increased to the level it deserves to be at!! He is a villain who has been treated like a freaking buffoon in recent comics, when, in reality, he has absolutely always been one good story away from being Frank's main foe once again. Now…it seems my prayers have been answered after years, and we are getting this story. I can't wait. Amazing writing by Percy, letting us get inside Frank's head. The art by Soares is just so detailed and mean. And y'all even brought Micro back. I'm dialed in, let's go!!!

Locked and loaded,
Nick

Thanks for your letter, Nick! Like you, I've got a great affection for Jigsaw, and as soon as we knew we were going to be working on this book, Ben LEAPT at the notion of bringing him back into Frank's orbit. To me, he's always been as close to a real super-villain archenemy that Frank has gotten, and I dunno about you, but I can't wait to see what final terrifying twists and turns Ben has left up his sleeves for him!

Hello, PUNISHER team,

I'll be forthright--I'm not really a Punisher fan. While the character is cool, I've just never vibed well with his morality, so he's a character I've largely avoided. With all of that said, I've been really expanding my roster of comics that I read, and with PUNISHER getting a new issue #1, I figured I'd finally give him a real try.

Issue #1 was solid. I liked the overall setup of the story with Frank struggling with his body "punishing" him, Jigsaw returning and Madeline being "punished" by being pushed away. Feels like a solid setup for the run, and I'm excited to see where things go from here. As previously stated, I haven't really read Punisher before, so I'm a little confused about some things going on, but maybe I'll backtrack a bit and/or fill in the pieces as I go.

Either way, the story seems solid so far. Aside from that, I really enjoyed the art in this book, and I feel that it fits the vibe of Punisher pretty well. I liked José Luis Soares' work on DAREDEVIL, so I was excited to see him attached to this book. I feel that the coloring by Frank D'Armata was a good choice and it's mind-blowing how much it can change an artist's vibe. When I compared this to DAREDEVIL, I was blown away by how different it felt. Anyway, I'm excited to give this character a real try, and it feels, so far, like this was a good choice for jumping on.

Catch y'all next month!

Cason J.
Sulphur Springs, Texas

I'm so glad to read your kind words about José, Cason! I think he's one of the grittiest and most grounded storytellers in comics today, and I leap at just about every chance to work with him possible! His style is such a great fit for Marvel's New York and street-level characters that, as it became apparent we were going to be putting this series together, we reached out to him immediately and are so glad he was able to take us on this tour de force featuring Frank! Trust me when I tell you that THIS IS ONLY THE BEGINNING!

Hello Sinners,

A killer comeback for the Punisher in issue #1. My hope is that this series can install a good 24-issue run before it fizzles out. Marvel has "meh" success for long runs on books.

I'm hoping that Percy's story writing will carry the book, even if the artwork goes sideways.

Kudos to the editing team for literally carrying the RED BAND series right into this ongoing series. Seamless, and a good move on your part for readers who are interested in storyline continuity.

Hopefully, Frank can get the rest of whatever's lodged in his noggin out soon and get right. There're folks out there who deserve to be punished.

Looking forward to the coming issues for this series. Thank you.

Shortpunk
Ypsilanti, Michigan

Thanks for your letter, Shortpunk! With this issue, Frank's certainly taken care of the tech in his skull--though whether or not he'll "get right" very much remains to be seen!

I don't think we'll get a better place to wrap this one up than that, Pun-pals! As ever, tell your comic shop that you want the best--and the best is PUNISHER!

Stay sharp!
Devin